

and the Nine," who would choose to scrape his feet on a *fac simile* of the Greek lyre.*

The most prolific subject of architectural criticism of late years, and which may deserve especial notice, is the so-called Crystal Palace; and among the absurdities ever issued from the public press in the shape of criticism, there have perhaps been none more ridiculous than those to which that building has given rise. On this subject remarks have been heaped on remarks, in the very wantonness of folly, by men profoundly ignorant of those principles of art, an intimate acquaintance with which could alone have enabled them to say anything worth printing. A great portion of the metropolitan press, one would have supposed, had forsworn common sense altogether. A temporary building of an immense size for a new and untried purpose, of small specific cost, and to be ready for use in a few months, is to be erected: that the idea of the aerial glass structure that now decorates Hyde-park did not occur to men whose life had been spent in designing with reference to brick and stone is not at all surprising, and might, one would think, have been foreseen; yet architects have been insulted in the press, because they did not design it, and by men who know not what architecture is,—as dead to all art-feeling and judgment as to candour in drawing inferences, and good manners in expressing them. Nevertheless, architects may take a lesson from its history: their mistake, if mistake they have made, was in not distinguishing between special purpose and routine material of construction. Reflecting on this subject some time back, the question rose to my mind, "had such a building been wanted two centuries ago in England, or three in Italy, would Sir C. Wren or Michel Angelo have given their attention to such a thing?" At first my impression was, that they would neither have troubled themselves about the matter, nor been expected to do so; but when I considered that they were not only architects, but men of genius and common sense, I was inclined to modify my opinion. When Buonarroti was appointed for the Sistine Frescoes, he began with cartoon drawings, and professional fresco painters—for he was not even an amateur at it himself—smiled in derision; but before long he turned the professional painters out, spread his own plaster, mixed his own colours, and painted himself frescoes that the others seem never to have thought of. Something like this in spirit, though not in exact form, has been the case with the Crystal Palace: a cloud of architects loomed on the horizon of Hyde-park, and the roar of the approaching ocean of brick and mortar was already heard. Fashion trembled for its favourite haunt; the press protested against the social outrage; calculation pointed out the ruinous expense of carriage, erection, and removal; the question was debated through the length and breadth of the land; but still the architectural mind-cloud loomed heavily: Mr. Paxton, who, I believe has never called himself an architect, stepped in and said, in effect, "You want a building waterproof, adapted to a special purpose; quick, easy, and inexpensive in erection or removal, and inoffensive to its neighbourhood: it is here; and now this day in Hyde-park, stands a structure which for magnitude, suitability to its purpose, and celerity of erection, we must all allow has not its equal in the world."

The prediction of its effect upon the architecture of the day is, nevertheless, as senseless as anything that has been said of it. We know to what extent glass can be used. If it had been always as cheap as at present, and

no window duty had existed, twenty-five or thirty per cent. more light would have been secured to our houses; but beyond that the use of glass could not go in domestic buildings, for we not only do not want to live in glass houses, but we could not with comfort. They would be as objectionable to us as they were to Lord Bacon or any of his contemporaries. As to public buildings generally the same objection would hold good. Besides, the art-spirit—the genius of architecture,—looks for a durable material. Stone or brick has been used for fifty centuries; what is there in glass to supply its place? Stone is the material on which the genius of our art has ever stamped its impress, and on which it will continue to put its signature until the end of time. Over the pyramids and temples of Egypt the storms of ages sweep in vain, for what is subject to the laws of gravity only is as durable, or may be made so, as the globe itself.

Much of the bad criticism of the day would fall powerless to the ground and be altogether innoxious did it not come supported by literary power and graced by eloquence of style. Against this the student should be warned: he should be taught that fine writing and correct judgment or prescience in art are distinct things. High literary qualities do not mark a higher degree of perception in colour, light and shade, design, or any other department of art: the art critic may be a man of commanding talent, nay, of a soaring imagination, and possess much poetic fervour: he may write in the most graceful style of composition, and be able to express his opinions with all the beauty and force of which language is capable; and yet withal may not be a judge of art productions. The qualifications named, may render him a very excellent critic in literature, for which literary qualification only is required; but to make the art-critic, powers of literary expression must be combined with educated perception in art: this he may be void of, or he may be under the influence of strong prejudices, blinded by antipathies, or narrowed by bigotry. Locke confirms the common observation that men who have a great deal of wit and prompt memories have not always the clearest judgment or strongest reason. The operations of judgment, as he remarks, proceed in a way quite contrary to metaphor and allusion, in which chiefly consist the entertainment and pleasantry of wit; but, as I before observed, artistic criticism is an art for which special education is required: taste must be cultivated by art; the most (naturally) acute and delicate perception requires to be cherished ere it can distinguish beauty from tinsel, and grace from affectation: the critic must to some extent travel the same road of culture as the artist; he should know the laws by which effects are produced, though unable to exercise them, and thus be competent to trace effect to cause, and fully analyse a work before pronouncing upon its merits.

To say that false or ungenerous criticism should not at all affect the mind or temper of the artist, is to require too much of humanity. It is a real evil, and one grievous to bear. Yet this paper is offered with but faint hope of contributing to its suppression in any considerable degree. Exposing it will never altogether suppress it: it is an inevitable result of a due liberty of the press, and we, therefore, expose foolish and unjust criticism, not with a view to suppress it, but that a knowledge of its shallowness and untruth may render it innoxious,—not to crush the reptile but to extract its sting. There are means of mitigating it, of which popular art-education is the chief; but what the artist has to do is, to render himself superior to it, as well as to stand firm against the corruption of public taste to which it must give birth. I have but small regard for those complaints we so frequently hear, that it keeps down nameless talent and exalts talentless name: the man that is true to himself cannot be ultimately kept down, for wrong is as fleeting as it is false; and we may be assured that as long as we remain true to our good gifts,—to the truths we see within us,—they will remain true to us. Self-pride spurs too often the

safeguards of patience and of faith: but was there ever an artist who, being steadfast and faithful to the high trusts confided to him, did yet lack his reward? Let those who make the complaints just mentioned prove but this,—establish but one absolute case,—and then open wide the flood-gates of querulousness, and drown the universal ear with a torrent of reproach; but till then keep those gates fast shut, and, turning the eye of sensitiveness from such morbid objects of contemplation, look upwards to the goodness of the Almighty Spirit, and the power of the eternal life.

There is no arbiter of the fate of genius: every journalist has a right to give his opinion, or that of his appointed critic, on any production, along with his reasons for forming it: but it is only opinion, not law, and cannot finally affect its rank. A work of art is virtually its own critic; it judges itself,—stands or falls by its own merit,—proceeds to its true place according to its native power, by a law of nature as certain—as invariable—as that by which water finds its level. What judgment has ever been passed upon Shakespeare? Have his works been thoroughly investigated, and weighed in the critical balance? I trow not. Yet have they taken their place for ever—deeply rooted in the hearts of men; and the case is similar of every genuine artist: he rises over all obstacles to his true position among the benefactors of his species,—the excellent of all time.

"Like some tall cliff that rears its awful form,
Swell from the vale and midway leaves the storm;
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

SAMUEL HUGGINS.

STATUES IN ENGLAND. THE FIGURES AT PORTSMOUTH.

As individuals seldom express, and probably never feel, themselves indebted to those who kindly point out to them a glaring defect in character; so it is with nations, which are but aggregations of individuals, usually entertain towards those who criticise, however gently, a national *faux* or defect, a lasting dislike; nevertheless, truth must and ought to be told them by some one. It is an ungrateful task, no doubt it resembles the taking of drugs or physical ailments agreeable, but often useful.

For some time past the English have been endeavouring to acquire a reputation for statue-making. There never was a more unfortunate mania. Like all other races of men the English (a compound of at least three races) have their good and bad qualities, their *forte* and *foible*. The grand defect of this people, as they are now constituted and amalgamated, is in respect of art, a total want of taste and feeling; taste for what is noble and grand, feeling for what is true and beautiful.* Was to this there happens to be superadded egotism, and a consequent self-sufficiency, unmatched, and, I think, unmatched, in the history of nations, saving always in the descendants of Englishmen in America, it becomes no difficult matter to foretell the course which such a race or nation is certain to adopt in respect of art. This result I have seen greatly and firmly stated, or at least, hinted at in *The Builder* of last week. The subject selected for exemplification was the proposal to erect a statue to a gentleman now alive, and holding a high commission in the military service of the country, lately commandant or governor of the fortified town of Portsmouth, an excellent honourable man, and a public benefactor to that town, and to the marshy, pestiferous island on which the town is built.

A few years ago I visited the district, and was charmed to see the efforts made to improve the place, and to ameliorate the condition of all classes of its inhabitants. There was a military man, and by education and feeling belonging to "the pipe-clay class," who, by beauty only in well-dressed battalions of upright men, troops of cavalry, and brigades of infantry,—a class of men to whom the very nature and art convey no meaning.—the general

* We allow the writer to speak his mind without comment.—Ed.

* While admitting this, I would, however, observe, that association is not a sufficient ground of objection in any case: the real objection to a column, for example, standing *vide supra* as a monument, is not the associated idea of an absurd entablature: if it were, there would be nothing absolutely wrong, for no law of art is violated; and the column being in itself a beautiful object, might be used by any people ignorant of its ordinary purpose. But the fact is, the column not only *excludes*, from general usage, the vice of its entablature, but its form betrays its original office: the contour of shaft, the curves of base and capital, all breathe of a burden,—are instinct with the sentiment of support; and can therefore have no meaning without an entablature. So that, in using a column as a monument, or rather taking it as a type of the monument, it is not its association with, but its relation to, the entablature that has to be destroyed: we have so to alter its contour and mouldings that it may be viewed as abstract form.